

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY
OF MASSACHUSETTS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THURSDAY, May 17, 2012

Today we gather to discuss how we can, in some small way, honor the breadth of Tip O'Neill's impact on our entire country, by recognizing the place that he loved the most.

We are here to discuss H.R. 4400, a bill I introduced to name the Salt Pond Visitor Center at Cape Cod National Seashore as the "Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Salt Pond Visitor Center."

I am proud to be joined on the bill by the entire Massachusetts delegation in the House of Representatives, who are all original co-sponsors of this legislation, along with Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, who has been the greatest Speaker of the House since Tip O'Neill. Senator John Kerry has introduced companion legislation in the Senate.

Many of us here who served with Tip remember his warmth, his magnetic personality, and his unyielding support for working families and the middle class. When I was elected to the House of Representatives 36 years ago, the very first vote I cast was the vote to elect Tip O'Neill Speaker of the House in 1977. It was my first vote, and my best vote. I had the honor of serving with Tip for ten years--his entire tenure as Speaker, which was the longest continuous term of any Speaker since the first Congress met in 1789.

He served the public for 50 years, including 34 years as a Member of Congress. A public service powerhouse at the state, federal and international level of American politics, Tip embodied the values we strive for as servants of the people's business. As an Irish-Catholic politician from Boston, I am proud of Tip's successful international negotiations that helped to pave the way for peace in Northern Ireland. As an American, I feel privileged to have served with such an historic guardian of America's neediest families. And as a citizen of Massachusetts, I am pleased to introduce this bill to forever recognize a great defender of the natural beauty of Cape Cod.

Tip may have spent long days and weeks leading the House of Representatives, but there was no place more representative of the man, and of Tip's dedication to his family, as in his house on the Cape.

That is where he could retreat with his partner in life, his dear Millie, and their five children, and their eight grandchildren. Joining us at this hearing today is Leigh O'Neill, Tip's granddaughter, who is testifying on behalf of the entire O'Neill family. Thank you for joining us, Leigh. Also joining us is Tip's son, Thomas, and Rosemary and Catlin O'Neill.

The squawking of politicians in Washington may have been Tip's weekday passion, but the squawking of birds on the Cape is what brought him weekend peace.

The Cape Cod National Seashore is an earthly haven for countless birds, seals, and other wildlife. For Tip, it was heaven on Earth, where he could count his blessings every day.

Even the unique geography of the Cape is reminiscent of the Tip we all knew, its sweeping arm reminding us of Tip's outstretched hand, greeting everyone he met.

This year, on December 9th, Tip would be celebrating his 100th birthday. We all know where Tip would be spending it: on the shores of the Cape, in the sure company of his family, at peace, and smiling.

I thank the committee for holding this hearing, I thank Leigh for her loving embrace of her grandfather's legacy, and I thank Tip O'Neill, my mentor and my friend, for all that he did to improve the lives of millions of Americans, including my own.